Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims, in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended) A hot-fill process using a vertical form and fill machine for continuously preparing packaged, composite, cohesive food portions ~~consisting of two or more different food items~~ comprising at least nut butter and jelly wrapped in a flexible film, the process comprising the steps of:

(a) simultaneously and separately pumping ~~each of~~ the ~~two or more food items~~ nut butter and jelly to an extrusion location;

(b) simultaneously and separately extruding ~~each of~~ the ~~food items~~ nut butter and jelly and longitudinally enclosing the ~~food items~~ nut butter and jelly in a tubular web of the flexible film,

wherein sugar syrup is added to the nut butter just prior to extruding the nut butter and jelly;

(c) combining the ~~food items~~ nut butter and jelly into ~~a~~ predetermined food ~~portion~~ portions using a portion control method that varies ~~the~~ an extrusion speed based on an amount of the ~~food portion~~ nut butter and jelly present, wherein the ~~combined food items~~ nut butter and jelly within the ~~composite~~ predetermined food portions ~~portion comprise gels that~~ are in physical contact with each other ~~yet retain their individual product identity;~~ and

(d) sealing the predetermined food portions ~~portion~~ within the flexible film,

wherein a differential water activity of the nut butter and the jelly within the flexible film is less than about 0.5, and

wherein the ~~food portion~~ nut butter and jelly ~~maintains~~ maintain ~~its~~ their individual product identity in the flexible film, ~~and~~ are ~~is~~ cohesive and manually removeable from the flexible film.

2. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein the water activity of at least one of the ~~food items~~ nut butter and jelly is modified in a predetermined manner by the addition of sugar.

3. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein the predetermined food portions comprise food slices which are sufficiently cohesive to permit manual removal of the food ~~slice~~ slices from the sealed wrapper while retaining textural and shape characteristics of the ~~slice~~ slices.

4. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein the predetermined food portions are hermetically sealed within their wrappers.

5. (Currently amended) The process of claim 1, ~~wherein the food portions comprises~~ further comprising forming slices after sealing the predetermined food portions ~~and the food items comprise nut butter and jelly~~.

6. (Currently amended) The process of Claim ~~5~~ 1, wherein the jelly comprises first and second thickeners, the first thickener causing the jelly to have a viscosity of less than about 5,000 centipoise during its extrusion, and the second thickener causing the jelly to have a viscosity of greater than about 100,000 centipoise following extrusion of the jelly and after setting of the second thickener.

7. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein the water activity of the jelly is reduced by the addition of the sugar syrup.

8. (Currently amended) The process of Claim ~~5~~ 1, wherein the water activity of the nut butter is increased by the addition of the sugar syrup.

9. (Currently amended) The process of Claim ~~5~~ 1, wherein a hard fat is added to the nut butter.

10. (Currently amended) The process of Claim ~~5~~ 1, wherein the nut butter comprises, by weight, about 50-90% peanut butter; about 1-40% peanut flour; about 0.5-5% stabilizer; about 0-10% sucrose; and about 0-2% salt.

11. (Currently amended) The process of Claim ~~5~~ 1, wherein the nut butter comprises, by weight, about 40-85% peanut butter; about 0-10% peanut flour; about 0-10% maltodextrin; about 0-40% corn syrup; about 0.5 5.0% stabilizer; about 0.5-4.0% emulsifier; about 0.1-3.0% salt; about 0-35% fructose; about 0-20% dextrose; and about 0-40% water.

12. (Currently amended) The process of Claim ~~5~~ 1, wherein the jelly comprises, by weight, about 5-20% fruit juice; about 0.5-5 % high methoxyl pectin; about 0.5-5% low methoxyl pectin; about 0.1-3% acidulants; and about 0-2.5% vegetable oil.

13. (Currently amended) The process of Claim ~~5~~ 1, wherein the jelly comprises, by weight, about 5-20% fruit juice; about 20-40% corn syrup; about 15-35% fructose; about 5-20% dextrose; about 0.25-4.0% konjac flour; about 0.05-2.0% carrageenan; about 0.5-4.0% high methoxyl pectin; about 0.1-3.0% citric acid; and about 0-2.5% vegetable oil.

14. (Currently Amended) A hot fill process using a vertical form and fill machine for continuously preparing a packaged, composite food portion ~~consisting of two or more different food items~~ comprising at least nut butter and jelly wrapped in a flexible film, the process comprising the steps of:

(a) simultaneously and separately pumping ~~each of~~ the ~~two or more food items~~ nut butter and jelly to an extrusion location, and simultaneously and

separately extruding ~~each of~~ the ~~food items~~ nut butter and jelly through two or more generally planar-shaped extrusion nozzles and combining them into a food portion,

wherein the ~~combined food items~~ nut butter and jelly within the food portion retain their individual product identity, and

wherein sugar syrup is added to the nut butter just prior to extrusion;

(b) longitudinally wrapping the food portion in a tubular web of the flexible film using the vertical form and fill machine;

(c) forming the tubular web into a slice shaped ~~food portion~~ body using one or more flattening devices;

(d) briefly maintaining separation of the ~~different food items~~ nut butter and jelly following extrusion and prior to ~~the formation of~~ forming the tubular web into ~~a~~ the slice shaped body~~, composite, gelled food portion~~ using one or more divider plates; and

(e) ~~enclosing and~~ sealing the ~~food portion~~ slice shaped body such that the nut butter and jelly ~~comprising the food items which~~ are in physical contact with each other ~~within the flexible film, wherein the food portion comprises slices and two or more generally planar-shaped extrusion nozzles are used~~ to provide a laminate food slice~~;~~,

wherein differential water activity of the nut butter and the jelly within the laminate food slice is less than about 0.5~~;~~, and

wherein the ~~composite food slices~~ nut butter and the jelly maintain their individual product identity and are sufficiently cohesive to permit manual removal of the laminate food slice from the wrapper while substantially retaining textural and shape characteristics of the laminate food slice.

15. (Canceled)

16. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 14, wherein the one or more divider plates ~~are~~ comprise plates coated with a substance having a low coefficient of friction.

17. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 16, wherein the one or more divider plates ~~are~~ comprise plates coated with Teflon®.

18. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein sealing the predetermined food portions ~~comprise~~ comprises forming food slices which are continuously sealed and wrapped at a rate in excess of 300 slices/minute at a single-lane machine.

19. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 18, wherein ~~the~~ forming food slices ~~are~~ comprises continuously ~~sealed~~ sealing and ~~wrapped~~ wrapping at a rate in excess of 700 slices/minute.

20. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 18, wherein ~~the~~ forming food slices ~~are~~ comprises continuously ~~sealed~~ sealing and ~~wrapped~~ wrapping at a rate in excess of 1,000 slices/minute.

21. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein using a portion control method comprises using sensing mechanisms ~~are employed~~ to maintain or regulate weights ~~of each~~ of the ~~two or more food items~~ nut butter and jelly.

22. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein using a portion control method comprises maintaining the amounts of ~~each of the two or more food items~~ the nut butter and jelly within ~~a~~ the predetermined food portion ~~are maintained~~ within predetermined ratios.

23. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 21, wherein ~~the~~ using sensing mechanisms ~~comprise~~ comprises using one or more of the following: mass flow meters, transducers and level sensors.

24. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, further comprising the step of heating ~~one or more of the food items~~ the nut butter and jelly into a soft, molten mass prior to their extrusion.

25. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein ~~the food items are~~ combining the nut butter and jelly comprises ~~oriented~~ orienting the nut butter and jelly in an alternating, generally stripe-shaped pattern within the predetermined food portions.

26. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, further comprising providing a plurality of adjacent extrusion nozzles.

27. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, further comprising providing two or more concentric extrusion tubes for extruding the ~~food items~~ nut butter and jelly in a variegated format.

28. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein ~~the wrapped food portion has~~ sealing the predetermined food portions comprises forming food portions having a refrigerated shelf life of greater than about six months.

29. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, further comprising the step of cooling the predetermined food portions following extrusion.

30. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 5, wherein forming slices comprises forming slices in which the hardness of the nut butter within the ~~finished food slice~~ slices is in the range of about 0.25-4.0 Kg/cm^2 at 43EF.

31. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 5, wherein forming slices comprises forming slices in which the hardness of the jelly within the ~~finished food slice~~ slices is in the range of about 0.25-4.0 Kg/cm^2 at 43EF.

32. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, further comprising the step of separately mixing ingredients for ~~each of one or more of the food items~~ the nut butter and jelly prior to the simultaneously and separately pumping the nut butter and jelly ~~step~~.

33. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 10, wherein ~~the~~ a nut component of the nut butter is created by combining nut flour with an edible oil.

34. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 6, wherein at least one of the first and second thickeners ~~each~~ comprises a gel ~~gels~~.

35. (Canceled)

36. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein sealing the ~~at least one of the~~ predetermined food portions ~~items~~ comprises forming wrapped food portions in which ~~a~~ one of the nut butter or jelly completely surrounds ~~another of the food items~~ the other within the wrapped food portion.

37. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein combining the nut butter and jelly into ~~the~~ predetermined food portions ~~portion~~ comprises forming food portions that are ~~is~~ consumable immediately following extrusion.

38. (Currently amended) A fluid fill process using a vertical form and fill machine for continuously preparing and packaging composite food portions ~~consisting of two or more different food items~~ comprising at least nut butter and jelly wrapped in a flexible film, the process comprising the steps of:

(a) heating at least one of the ~~two or more food items~~ nut butter and jelly to a soft, molten mass while maintaining at least one of the ~~two food items~~ nut butter and jelly in a liquid state;

(b) separately pumping each of the ~~two or more food items~~ nut butter and jelly to an extrusion location;

(c) adding sugar syrup to the nut butter;

(d) extruding ~~each of~~ the ~~food items~~ nut butter and jelly and combining them into a ~~predetermined,~~ composite ~~gelled,~~ food portion using a portion control method that varies ~~the~~ an extrusion speed based on an amount of the food

portion present, wherein the ~~different food items~~ nut butter and jelly are in physical contact with each other yet maintain their individual product identity; ~~and~~

(e) enclosing the ~~food portions~~ nut butter and jelly within the flexible film; and

(f) hermetically sealing ~~each food portion~~ the nut butter and jelly within a ~~hermetically sealed~~ package of the flexible film having hermetic longitudinal seals and a hermetic cross-seal,

wherein the differential water activity of the nut butter and the jelly within the package is less than about 0.5 and ~~food portions~~ the nut butter and the jelly are cohesive and manually removable from the ~~film~~ package.

39. (Canceled)

40. (Currently amended) A process using a vertical form and fill machine for continuously preparing and packaging ~~conformed food slices consisting of~~ nut butter and jelly ~~wrapped~~ in a flexible film, the process comprising the steps of

(a) heating and mixing the nut butter and jelly into a liquefied mixture, and adding sugar syrup to the nut butter;

(b) separately delivering each of the liquefied nut butter and jelly to an extrusion location;

(c) coextruding the nut butter and jelly so that each is combined into a predetermined, composite food portion using the vertical form and fill machine in which the nut butter and jelly are in physical contact with each other, using a portion control method that varies ~~the~~ an extrusion speed based on an amount of the food portion present, while permitting the nut butter and jelly within the food portion to maintain ~~its~~ their individual product identity;

~~adding sugar syrup to the nut butter prior to the extruding step;~~

(d) converting the food portion into a generally ~~slice-shape~~ slice-shaped food slices, wherein the food slices are sufficiently cohesive to permit

manual removal of the food ~~slice~~ slices from the ~~wrapper~~ flexible film while substantially retaining their textural and shape characteristics ~~of the slice~~; ~~and~~

(e) wrapping the ~~coextruded~~ food slices within the flexible film; and

(f) sealing ~~each~~ the food ~~slice~~ slices within the ~~wrapper~~ flexible film,

wherein a differential water activity of the nut butter and the jelly within the flexible film is less than about 0.5 and the food slices ~~the food portions~~ are cohesive and manually removable from the flexible film.

41. (Canceled)

42. (Canceled)

43. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 40, wherein sealing the food slices comprises ~~are~~ hermetically sealing ~~sealed within their wrappers~~ the food slices within the flexible film.

44. (Withdrawn) A food slice wrapped in a flexible film, comprising:

nut butter and jelly whose product identity and organoleptic attributes are each individually maintained within the slice;

the food slice being sufficiently cohesive to permit manual removal from the film while substantially retaining textural and shape characteristics of the slice;

wherein the nut butter comprises, by weight, about 40-85% peanut butter; 0-40% peanut flour; 0.5-5.0% stabilizer; 0-10% sucrose; 0-3.0% salt; 0-10% maltodextrin; 0-40% high fructose corn syrup; 0-35% fructose; 0-20% dextrose; and 0-40% water.

45. (Withdrawn) A food slice wrapped in a flexible film, comprising:

nut butter and jelly whose product identity and organoleptic attributes are each individually maintained within the slice;

the food slice being sufficiently cohesive to permit manual removal from the film while substantially retaining textural and shape characteristics of the slice;

wherein the jelly comprises, by weight, about 40-55% sucrose; 5-20% fruit juice; 1-5% high methoxyl pectin; 1-5% low methoxyl pectin; 0.1-3% citric acid; 0-2.5% vegetable oil; 0-40% high fructose corn syrup; 13-35% fructose; 5-20% dextrose; 0.25-4% konjac flour; and 0.05-2% carrageenan.

46. (Withdrawn) The wrapped food slice of Claim 45, wherein the jelly comprises, by weight, about 20-40% high fructose corn syrup.

47. (Withdrawn) The wrapped food slice of Claim 44, wherein the nut butter comprises, by weight, about 0-40% high fructose sugar syrup and the jelly comprises, by weight, about 20-40% high fructose corn syrup.

48. (Withdrawn) The wrapped food slice of Claim 44, wherein the water activity of one or both of the nut butter and jelly is modified in a predetermined manner.

49. (Withdrawn) The wrapped food slice of Claim 44, wherein the differential water activity of the nut butter and jelly within the wrapped food slice is less than about 0.5.

50. (Withdrawn) The wrapped food slice of Claim 44, wherein the differential water activity of the nut butter and jelly within the wrapped food slice is less than about 0.2.

51. (Withdrawn) The wrapped food slice of Claim 44, wherein sugar is used to increase the water activity of the nut butter to a predetermined level or to decrease the water activity of the jelly to a predetermined level.

52. (Withdrawn) The wrapped food slice of Claim 44, wherein the food slice is hermetically sealed within the flexible film.

53. (Withdrawn) The wrapped food slice of Claim 44, wherein the flexible film comprises polypropylene having an ethylene vinyl alcohol oxygen barrier layer and one or more sealant layers comprising polypropylene, polyethylene and polybutylene.

54. (Withdrawn) The wrapped food slice of Claim 44, wherein the flexible film comprises polypropylene and a glycerol monostearate release agent.

55. (Withdrawn) The wrapped food slice of Claim 44, wherein the wrapped food slice has a refrigerated shelf life of greater than about three months.

56. (Withdrawn) The wrapped food slice of Claim 44, wherein the wrapped food slice has a refrigerated shelf life of greater than about six months.

57. (Withdrawn) The wrapped food slice of Claim 44, wherein the wrapped food slice includes food items to which food preservatives have not been added, and has a refrigerated shelf life of greater than about six months.

58. (Withdrawn) The wrapped food slice of Claim 44, wherein the hardness of the nut butter within the finished food slice is in the range of about 0.25-4.0 Kg/cm^2 at 43 °F.

59. (Withdrawn) The food slice of Claim 44, wherein the hardness of the jelly within the finished food slice is in the range of about 0.25-4.0 Kg/cm^2 at 43 °F.

60. (Currently amended) A fluid fill process using a vertical form and fill machine for continuously preparing a composite food portion ~~portions consisting of two or more different food items wrapped~~ comprising nut butter and jelly in a flexible film, wherein the ~~food items~~ nut butter and jelly maintain their individual product identity, the process comprising the steps of:

(a) preparing ~~each of~~ the ~~two or more different food items~~ nut butter and jelly~~, the food items comprising gels~~;

(b) separately delivering ~~each of the two or more food items~~ the nut butter and jelly to an extrusion location;

(c) continuously coextruding the ~~food items~~ nut butter and jelly and combining them into a predetermined amount ~~of~~ to form the composite food portion using a portion control method that varies the extrusion speed based on an amount of the composite food portion present, while permitting the ~~food items~~ nut butter and jelly within the composite food portion to maintain their individual product identity,

wherein sugar syrup is added to the nut butter just prior to extruding the nut butter and jelly;

~~forming the tubular web into a slice shaped food product;~~

(d) briefly maintaining separation of the ~~food items~~ nut butter and jelly following extrusion ~~and prior to the formation of the web into a slice shaped food product~~ using one or more divider plates; and

(e) enclosing the composite food portion ~~comprising the different food items which~~ such that the nut butter and jelly are in physical contact with each other within the flexible film,

wherein differential water activity of the nut butter and the jelly within the tubular web is less than about 0.5; and

(f) sealing ~~each~~ the food portion within the flexible film,

wherein the composite food ~~portions are~~ portion is cohesive and manually removable from the flexible film.

61. (Canceled)

62. (Canceled)

63. (Currently amended) A fluid fill process using a vertical form and fill machine for continuously preparing ~~conformed~~ composite food slices ~~consisting of~~

comprising nut butter and jelly wrapped in a flexible film, the process comprising the steps of:

(a) preparing the nut butter and jelly into a fluidic mixture;

(b) delivering the fluidic mixture of heated nut butter d jelly to an extrusion location;

(c) continuously coextruding the nut butter and jelly;

(e) adding sugar syrup to the nut butter ~~and to the jelly~~ prior to the coextrusion step;

(f) using the vertical form and fill machine, simultaneously filling the ~~coextruded~~ nut butter and jelly within a tubular web of the flexible film, forming the tubular web into a slice-shaped form, and longitudinally sealing the ~~film~~ tubular web using one or more longitudinal sealing bars to form a hermetic longitudinal seal;

~~forming the product-filled film into a slice-shaped form before longitudinal sealing of the film;~~

(g) sealing the ~~film~~ tubular web at cross sealing locations to form hermetic cross seals, wherein differential water activity of the nut butter and the jelly within the tubular web is less than about 0.5;and

(h) cooling the ~~product-filled film~~ tubular web either before or after cross-sealing of the ~~film~~ tubular web~~;~~ to thereby provide hermetically sealed food slices ~~each of which contain the nut butter and the jelly, the food slices being~~ wrapped and hermetically sealed within the flexible film, wherein the ~~food items~~ nut butter and jelly within the composite food slices maintain their individual product identity and are cohesive and manually removable from the flexible film.

64. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 63, wherein continuously preparing composite food slices comprises preparing the food ~~slice~~ slices~~,~~ such that while at ambient room temperatures, the food slices have ~~has~~ sufficient cohesiveness ~~such that it may~~ so that they can be manually removed from ~~its sealed~~

~~wrapper~~ the flexible film while substantially retaining the textural and shape characteristics of ~~the~~ a food slice.

65. (Canceled)

66. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein ~~the amount of the food portion present is derived by~~ using the portion control method comprises measuring the expansion or contraction of the tubular web of film ~~depending upon~~ that is caused by the amount of ~~food~~ nut butter and jelly present within the tubular web ~~film~~.

67. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 66~~, wherein~~ further comprising using an electric motor controlled by a variable frequency drive ~~is used~~ to control the amount of ~~food~~ nut butter and jelly introduced into the tubular web ~~of film~~.

68. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 67~~,~~ further comprising using a linear variable differential transformer, wherein motor speed changes depending upon a sensed voltage, the sensed voltage fluctuating with expansions or contractions in the tubular web ~~of film~~.

69. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 21, wherein using ~~the~~ sensing ~~mechanism~~ mechanisms comprises using a bubble control device for controlling the amount of ~~food items~~ nut butter and jelly enclosed in the tubular web ~~by the flexible film~~.

70. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 40, further comprising the step of adding sugar syrup to the food items prior to the extruding step but after substantial mixing has occurred.

71. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, wherein using a ~~the~~ portion control method ~~permits an adjustment in~~ comprises adjusting the relative amount of ~~two or more of~~ the ~~food items~~ nut butter and jelly within a food portion.

72. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 14, wherein ~~the food items are combined~~ combining the nut butter and jelly into a food portion using a portion control method ~~that varies~~ comprises varying ~~the~~ an extrusion speed based on an amount of the food portion present.

73. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 72, wherein using a portion control ~~method permits an adjustment in~~ adjusting the relative amount of ~~two or more of~~ the nut butter and jelly ~~food items~~ within a food portion.

74. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 73, wherein using one or more divider plates comprises moving at least one of the one or more divider plates ~~is moved~~ to permit an adjustment in the relative amount of ~~two or more of~~ the nut butter and jelly ~~food items~~ within a food portion.

75. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 1, further comprising the steps of cooling and then flattening the ~~product filled~~ nut butter and jelly ~~film~~.

76. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 75, wherein ~~the~~ cooling and flattening the nut butter and jelly ~~steps occur~~ occurs after the nut butter and jelly ~~food items~~ are enclosed within the tubular web ~~of film~~.

77. (Currently amended) The process of Claim ~~1~~ 75, wherein the cooling step ~~is accomplished~~ comprises using cooling water.

78. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 40, wherein ~~the~~ adding sugar syrup to the nut butter comprises adding corn syrup.

79. (Currently amended) The fluid fill process of Claim 63, wherein ~~the~~ adding sugar syrup comprises adding corn syrup.

80. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 40~~, wherein~~ further comprising forming jelly including a gum ~~is used~~ to enhance gel formation of the jelly.

81. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 80~~, wherein~~ further comprising adding sugar ~~is used~~ to disperse the gum.

82. (Currently amended) The process of Claim 81, wherein ~~the~~ adding sugar comprises adding sugar syrup.